



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Heroism and Athletics Converge in Omaha this Summer
*Veterans Prepare for Largest Annual Wheelchair Sports Event***

WASHINGTON – The 28th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, scheduled to take place July 25–29 in Omaha, Neb., will attract more than 500 veterans with disabilities. It has become the largest annual wheelchair sports competition in the world. Veterans from conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will again join their fellow veterans in 17 competitive events being offered in Omaha.

“We are proud to present this outstanding rehabilitation event, a therapeutic extension of the superior health care veterans receive in our medical centers each day,” said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. “Rehabilitation is crucial to living a full life following an injury. I applaud all of the veterans participating as they strive to achieve their goals during this week of athletic competition.”

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games, presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments.

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System in Omaha and the Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter are hosting the 2008 Games. Veterans competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games come from nearly every state as well as Puerto Rico and Great Britain.

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Wheelchair Games 2/2/2/2

“Like serving our nation, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games are not really about the medals. Instead, they're a mix of camaraderie, competition and courage. And they're rehabilitation at its best for our paralyzed veterans," said Randy L. Pleva, Sr., National President of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. "If you are in the Omaha area, please join us this July. You'll be inspired.”

At the Games, veterans will compete in swimming, basketball, track, weightlifting, softball, air guns, quad rugby, nine-ball, field events, bowling, table tennis, archery, handcycling, wheelchair slalom, trapshooting, a motorized wheelchair relay and power soccer. An exhibition event in sled hockey will also take place this year. For the second year, several stand-up events will be held for athletes with amputations who choose to compete using prosthetic devices instead of competing in their wheelchairs.

The 28th National Veterans Wheelchair Games begin July 25 with a kick-off wheelchair basketball demonstration at the Qwest Center Omaha, and the 2008 Disabled Sports, Recreation and Fitness Expo. Kids Day at the Games will take place on July 27 at Northwest High School, where local children with disabilities will meet the athletes and learn about wheelchair sports.

Opening and closing ceremonies will also be held at the Qwest Center Omaha, along with many of the week's competitive events. Other events will be held at the Henry Doorly Zoo, the University of Nebraska, Mockingbird and Thunderbowl Lanes and other area venues. Admission is free to the public and the community is encouraged to attend.

Sports are important in the therapy used to treat many disabilities. VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitation, with therapeutic programs available at VA health care facilities across the nation. For many injured veterans, the Wheelchair Games provide their first exposure to wheelchair athletics.

For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games or to volunteer during the week, visit the Games Web site at www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.

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